

ARCHIVE COPY

97-E-20

C. 1

NATIONAL DEFENSE UNIVERSITY

NATIONAL WAR COLLEGE

**THE SEVEN DAYS CAMPAIGN AND FRICTION· LEE AND CLAUSEWITZ
DISCUSS SUCCESS AND FAILURE ON THE CHICKAHOMINY**

(As recorded on "This Week With David Brinkley", July 3, 1862)

CORE COURSE 5602 ESSAY

Captain Michael T. Fuqua/Class of 1997
Fundamentals of Military Thought and Strategy--Course 5602
Seminar I
Captain Steve Doyle

Report Documentation Page				Form Approved OMB No. 0704-0188	
Public reporting burden for the collection of information is estimated to average 1 hour per response, including the time for reviewing instructions, searching existing data sources, gathering and maintaining the data needed, and completing and reviewing the collection of information. Send comments regarding this burden estimate or any other aspect of this collection of information, including suggestions for reducing this burden, to Washington Headquarters Services, Directorate for Information Operations and Reports, 1215 Jefferson Davis Highway, Suite 1204, Arlington VA 22202-4302. Respondents should be aware that notwithstanding any other provision of law, no person shall be subject to a penalty for failing to comply with a collection of information if it does not display a currently valid OMB control number.					
1. REPORT DATE 1997		2. REPORT TYPE		3. DATES COVERED 00-00-1997 to 00-00-1997	
4. TITLE AND SUBTITLE The Seven Days Campaign and Friction: Lee and Clausewitz Discuss Success and Failure on the Chickahominy				5a. CONTRACT NUMBER	
				5b. GRANT NUMBER	
				5c. PROGRAM ELEMENT NUMBER	
6. AUTHOR(S)				5d. PROJECT NUMBER	
				5e. TASK NUMBER	
				5f. WORK UNIT NUMBER	
7. PERFORMING ORGANIZATION NAME(S) AND ADDRESS(ES) National War College, 300 5th Avenue, Fort Lesley J. McNair, Washington, DC, 20319-6000				8. PERFORMING ORGANIZATION REPORT NUMBER	
9. SPONSORING/MONITORING AGENCY NAME(S) AND ADDRESS(ES)				10. SPONSOR/MONITOR'S ACRONYM(S)	
				11. SPONSOR/MONITOR'S REPORT NUMBER(S)	
12. DISTRIBUTION/AVAILABILITY STATEMENT Approved for public release; distribution unlimited					
13. SUPPLEMENTARY NOTES					
14. ABSTRACT see report					
15. SUBJECT TERMS					
16. SECURITY CLASSIFICATION OF:			17. LIMITATION OF ABSTRACT	18. NUMBER OF PAGES 12	19a. NAME OF RESPONSIBLE PERSON
a. REPORT unclassified	b. ABSTRACT unclassified	c. THIS PAGE unclassified			

THE SEVEN DAYS CAMPAIGN AND FRICTION: LEE AND CLAUSEWITZ DISCUSS SUCCESS AND FAILURE ON THE CHICKAHOMINY

Transcript from "This Week With David Brinkley" dated July 3, 1862

David Brinkley: Good morning. This morning, in the aftermath of an extremely bloody and long fought battle around Richmond, we have as our guests, one of the foremost theorists of war in the post-Napoleonic age, Prussian General Carl Von Clausewitz and the commander of the recently renamed Confederate Army of Northern Virginia, General Robert E. Lee. General Lee, while this seven days of fighting now seems to be waning and the South has scored a strategic victory, there were several tactical defeats along the way at a tremendous price to your forces. Please give our viewers some background on the events leading up to this campaign and an overview of the campaign itself.

General Lee: Well David, it's no secret that the war has produced mixed results for the Confederacy. While we enjoyed enormous initial success at Manassas and have a population imbued with the rightness of our cause, we have suffered setbacks in the Western theater at Forts Henry and Donelson and particularly at Shiloh. Additionally, the Union's efforts at a Naval Blockade are starting to have some effect, although that is open to debate. Recently, one of our greatest generals, Thomas "Stonewall" Jackson, has performed extremely well in the Shenandoah Valley and has rejuvenated Confederate spirits.

With regard to this most recent campaign, there can be no denying that little more than two months ago we were in dire straits. The Federals had fought their way up the peninsula against tough Confederate opposition and were poised on the outskirts of

Richmond. I believe the closest approach which General McClellan's forces made were within six miles of Richmond¹. After the battle of Seven Pines in late May, my good friend Joe Johnston was wounded and I took command. Even though circumstances were not the most favorable, I was resolved to drive the Federals from the gates of Richmond, and in so doing destroy the Army of the Potomac. Although outnumbered, we possessed what we thought were sound battle plans, adequate intelligence, and determination of spirit. However, the Federals have proven more resolute than envisioned. Through seven days of fighting from May 25th to July 1st, the Confederacy suffered several tactical defeats at Mechanicsville, Savage Station, Glendale, and Malvern Hill. The only battle which could be called a Southern tactical victory occurred at Gaines Mill. And yet we have enjoyed a strategic success which has driven the Union army back to the North. The reason for our strategic victory seems to have been my determination to concentrate forces strategically at points of weakness in accordance with Jominian principles², a fair amount of luck, and also the lack of will on the part of their commander, General McClellan.

David Brinkley: Thank you General. Cokie?

Cokie Roberts: General Von Clausewitz, we've heard General Lee describe the Seven Days campaign and its tactical and strategic results. Why do you believe that Confederate forces were successful in driving Union forces from Richmond?

General Von Clausewitz: While Jominian principles of concentration may form a methodology for conducting war and are important in a limited sense, I believe and have

¹ James McPherson *Battle Cry of Freedom* p. 427 (Oxford University Press, 1988)

² Russell F. Weigley *The American Way of War*, p. 105 (Indiana University Press, 1973)

written, that the conduct of war is simply using the given means in combat and that this forms the art of war. Further, while conduct is important, there are infinitely more important aspects to the art of war such as military genius, danger, physical effort and intelligence all of which form, along with a myriad of other complications, what I call "friction" in war. Simply stated, in war everything is very simple, but the simplest thing is difficult³. General Lee was frustrated throughout this campaign by this friction. He was a new commander trying to impose a complicated campaign plan in somewhat desperate circumstances with convoluted lines of communications. His staff was not of his intellect nor determination and he was beset by unexpected things that happen to lower performance. That a strategic victory was attained was due in no small measure to his perseverance and, unfortunately for the Union, General McClellan's timidity and lack of will in executing his plan. Let me also say that General McClellan too suffered from this friction as all armies must. He had a superior force, the knowledge that he was knocking on Richmond's doorstep, and tactically good ground upon which to fight. Predictably though, his usual overestimate of the enemy's forces, his lack of confidence in his battle plan, and, once again and most importantly, the cumulative effect of many small problems outside of his control combined to bring about his strategic defeat.

Roberts: General Lee, you are quoted as saying that under ordinary circumstances the Federal Army should have been destroyed. Tell us what you meant.

General Lee: General Von Clausewitz has a very good point. Several small things multiplied to cause us incredible frustration. We suffered lapses in command and staff

Carl Von Clausewitz On War p. 119 (Princeton University Press 1976)

work, in communications, faulty maps, in intelligence gathering even though we were on home territory, reluctant commanders, and in organizational efficiency. Some of our operational plans were too complicated, calling for concentric assault by several divisions and the friction previously mentioned only served to complicate these plans even further. The time we had to prepare was certainly a factor, but more importantly we had not fought as a unit and I really had not forged the chain of command into an extension of my will. In the coming days we will be making several organizational and personnel changes to try to minimize these frictional problems, recognizing that they can never be eliminated. But, most importantly, however great the cost in human lives, this strategic victory provided a mighty boost for both our Army and on the home front.

Sam Donaldson: General Von Clausewitz, much has been made of the failure of Stonewall Jackson and his troops throughout the campaign and especially in supporting General A. P. Hill during several battles. How do you account for this surprising failure in light of his past successes?

General Von Clausewitz: Sam, the physical effort in war is unrelenting. Exhaustion is common. Of the many things in war that can not be measured, physical effort is the most important.⁴ Exhilaration in victory can sometimes overcome exhaustion, but even operating on adrenaline has its limits. When I speak of physical effort, I'm talking about the mental as well as the physical. It takes a strong mind to drive an army to exhaustion. General Jackson is one of the South's finest leaders but it is well known that his stamina is limited. He requires frequent rests and stops completely on the Sabbath. So I attribute

⁴ Ibid p. 15

his less than stellar showing in this campaign not only to ambiguous directions from General Lee's staff, on which he has already commented, but also to both he and his troops being at the limits of physical effort after his exhausting yet highly successful Valley campaign

General Lee: I would like to add that I consider Stonewall Jackson our best tactical General. He has repeatedly proven himself and deservedly has my full confidence. That his troops were slow in arriving and may have been lethargic in engagement, and that is subject to debate. I can see now was the result of many factors. They were certainly at the limits of physical effort, the maps and terrain were confusing and I could not get my desires communicated properly.

Sam Donaldson: General Lee, let's talk a moment about intelligence. You have both stated that intelligence was a failure during this campaign, and yet you had General Stuart's division, which is the best cavalry in the army, and you were fighting on home territory. Why was there a breakdown in intelligence?

General Lee: I have been a fan of Jeb Stuart's since he bounced my daughters on his knee while a student of mine at West Point. He is certainly our best cavalry officer and his reconnaissance from June 12th to 16th was nothing short of remarkable. I needed information on the location and strength of the right flank of the Union forces so I deployed General Stuart's division. I knew that Confederate cavalry was much superior to Union cavalry due to their heritage in the saddle and the more efficient manner in which we had them organized⁵. He completely encircled the Union forces in four days.

⁵ James McPherson, Battle Cry of Freedom, p. 463 (Ballantine Books, 1988)

and a hundred miles and brought back information as to the disposition of General Porter's 5th Corps north of the Chickahominy. This was a key bit of intelligence which sparked our attack at Mechanicsville and allowed me to persuade President Davis as to the wisdom of splitting our army in order to carry out this attack. I might add that General Magruder's forces protecting Richmond performed magnificent theatrics in preventing a much superior Union force from attacking. I shiver to think what would have happened if General McClellan would have realized that his forces outnumbered ours outside Richmond by almost two to one. But I guess that's just more of that friction that General Von Clausewitz is talking about. But to return to your question, intelligence must be continuous. Having the information about General Porter's troops was invaluable, but it was a snapshot in time. We needed ongoing information which would give us a good picture of the enemy's dispositions, and that was just very difficult to obtain. We did have some local assistance from the populace, but most people had gotten out of the way of the impending battles.

General Von Clausewitz: Intelligence is the most delicate of all the aspects of friction in war. Many reports are contradictory, even more are false, and most are uncertain.⁶ That is why the strength of the commander's judgment is so important and what made the difference in this campaign. General Lee did not have thorough intelligence and there were mistakes made, but he trusted his judgment as contradictory reports continued to stream in. Certainly luck and cunning played a part in the campaign's success, but he had

⁶ Carl Von Clausewitz, On War, p. 117 (Princeton University Press, 1976).

a strategic idea of his ultimate goal and was actively engaged in determining his forces' capabilities and vulnerabilities. That is what made the difference.

George Will: General Von Clausewitz, the Seven Days campaign in some ways changed the tenor of this war. We've had as many casualties in seven days as in all the battles in the western theater during the first half of the year. The dangerous aspects of this war to the populace at large now seems irrefutable.

General Von Clausewitz: As I have stated in my book, to someone who has never experienced danger, the idea is attractive rather than alarming.⁷ In the beginning, there was very little appreciation as to the dangerous aspects which the war brought by the general populace. However, this war has now aroused such enmity and passion that I predict it will be long and bloody. From the outside looking in, one has the tendency to evoke primordial passion and violence against the enemy. But it is quite another matter when facing danger straight in the eyes. It is easy for academics and politicians to discuss the theories and practice of war without having to face the incredibly mind-numbing danger, but to have experienced it is the only way to understand it. If we look at a battlefield, it is obvious that there is a layering of the violence. The problem is that most observers don't get close enough to feel or even witness the chaos and devastation produced in battle. When first experienced, most men are unable to keep their powers of decision. That is why the judgment and courage of the commander is so important. However, war is truly horrific and, once again, experience is the only teacher.

⁷ Ibid. p. 3

General Lee My concern for humanity and Christian devotion causes me to grieve for the killed and wounded on both sides of this great war. But as a professional soldier who has seen too much of the horrendous episodes which General Von Clausewitz just spoke, my goal is to end this war as quickly as possible. To that end, I am troubled that the friction we have been speaking about has, in large measure, allowed the Army of the Potomac to escape when, under ordinary circumstances, it should have been destroyed. Strategically, we will continue to pursue this goal.

George Will: General Von Clausewitz, General Lee is being touted as the savior of Richmond, if not the entire Confederacy. People are convinced that the miraculous halt of the Federal Army outside Richmond was due to the ascension of General Lee to Command of the Army of Northern Virginia. He's even being called a military genius. What's your assessment?

General Von Clausewitz: Military genius results from a complex amalgamation of several character traits which combine to propel one to greatness. As I have written, two qualities are indispensable: first, an intellect that, even in the darkest hour, retains some glimmerings of the inner light which leads to truth, and second, the courage to follow this faint light wherever it may lead.⁸ These characteristics are certainly present in General Lee. As I have said, he had a strategic vision which guided him and superb judgment in the face of unreliable intelligence on which course to take. But military genius is also dependent on some external factors which the commander has very little control. These are, among other things, danger, exertion, uncertainty and chance. We have discussed

⁸ Ibid. p. 102

these to some extent but there is no doubt that, while the smart commander controls every aspect of the battle to minimize any negative aspects of these external factors, they are always contributory elements to the whole aspect of friction which, once again, makes even the simplest things difficult.

General Lee: My goal is to win the war. I have been a professional soldier all my life and humbly offered my services to my beloved Virginia. To that end, I have employed the strategy and tactics I thought would succeed. I am dismayed that, while the Federals have been driven from the doorstep of Richmond, so many frustrating incidents which just weren't foreseen could combine to result in one after another tactical defeat. Such simple things as not all cannons getting the message to fire on Malvern Hill in a coordinated manner or confusion in the delivery of my assault orders which resulted in disjointed, individual brigade attacks definitely contributed to increased casualties in this campaign. We must have an improved command structure, clear communications, reliable intelligence, and a plan to minimize exhaustion in our struggle. But we can't get rid of the danger in war. No matter how much we improve the things I have mentioned, friction will always be present. And that is because, as General Von Clausewitz has said, "each part (of the Army) is composed of individuals, every one of whom retains his potential for friction"⁹. Each individual has the capacity to delay things or cause some aspect of the battle not to proceed according to plan. Even if the friction present in individuals does not cause insurmountable problems, the very nature of the dangerous aspects of war discussed earlier on Army's as a whole, can combine to cause a very

⁹ Ibid p. 19

frustrating orchestration of events. When that is the case, I believe it is vitally important to not only recognize and overcome the friction, but also to set realistic expectations so the inevitable frictions always present will be minimized.

General Von Clausewitz: The Seven Days campaign was a miraculous strategic victory borne out of several tactical defeats. Such is not always the case. While driving the Federals off the peninsula was not an easy endeavor, given the Union's retreat mentality, timidity of command, and their own set of circumstances which caused them considerable friction, the South should have been tactically more successful. The elements of friction which we have discussed today obviously had great impact on both sides, but I believe greater impact on the Confederacy.

Brinkley: Thank you both very much. Coming next, we'll talk with Confederacy President Jefferson Davis and, in our Washington studios, President Abraham Lincoln, in a moment.

Bibliography

Addington, Larry, The Patterns of War Since the Eighteenth Century, pp 81-84 (Indiana University Press. 1984)

Clausewitz, Carl Von, On War, pp 75-123. (Princeton University Press, 1976)

Howard. Michael, Clausewitz, pp. 23-33 (Oxford University Press. 1983)

McPherson, James, Battle Cry of Freedom, pp. 423-489 (Ballantine Books, 1988)

Paret, Peter, Makers of Modern Strategy, pp. 186-213 (Princeton University Press, 1986)

Sears, Stephen. To the Gates of Richmond (Ticknor and Fields, 1992)

Weigley, Russell, The American Way of War, pp 105-109 (Indiana University Press, 1973)